

RUTGERS - THE STATE UNIVERSITY

PUBLIC POLICY FORUM  
on  
CIVIL DISORDERS:  
Causes and Remedies

Discussion Agenda  
Discussion Group 3 - ECONOMIC CONDITIONS

Prepared by

Robert S. Browne  
Assistant Professor of Economics  
Fairleigh Dickinson University

In my opinion, the crisis of our cities, which is to say the crisis of race relations, divides itself into 3 problems, each of which must be dealt with on its own terms: (a) achieving dignity for the individual; (b) achieving economic well being for the individual; and (c) achieving integrity for the black community. The first, and foremost, of these problems I will deal with only indirectly, for its solution is not to be found primarily in the economic arena. The economic status of the individual, however, as well as the nature of his community, do play a significant role in affording or denying him dignity, so our solution of the second and third problems will certainly aid in the resolution of the first one.

At the outset, I wish to confess to a certain degree of insecurity growing from the fact that I do not myself reside in one of New Jersey's urban ghettos and consequently am not familiar with the day to day details of New Jersey's several ghettos. Indeed, it is this very realization which leads me directly into what I consider to be the first priority consideration to be given to all efforts to improve ghetto conditions.

(1) The ghetto residents must be provided the opportunity for maximum involvement in the planning and execution of all activities undertaken in their communities. The Select Committee Report offered several recommendations along this general line, focussing on the anti-poverty programs in Newark, Plainfield, and Englewood. Lacking specific knowledge of the operational details of these programs I am unable to evaluate each of those recommendations. However, it seems clear that those recommendations which favor decentralization of the anti-poverty programs are of the utmost importance. Only if people feel that they have real control over their neighborhoods can they be expected to take a serious and sustained interest in rebuilding and maintaining them. Whether even the existing structure





undertaken to lend by local-made recipients of government deposits. Profits from these industries could be earmarked for other commercial ventures, or for community services to be determined by the community-based shareholders. These plants could be set up on a turn-key basis by private enterprise, which would train the local residents to operate them and then sell them to the neighborhood corporations. (Responsibility of federal government, SBA, State executive and legislative branches, and of municipalities.)